



**AMERICAN
KENNEL CLUB™**

September 2, 2016

Re: Please Support SB 239 -- Prohibiting Breed Specific Dog Laws

Dear Members of the House Local Government Committee:

The American Kennel Club (AKC) writes on behalf of our 158 affiliated dog clubs in Michigan and thousands of responsible dog owners in the Michigan to urge you to support Senate Bill 239, which prohibits breed-specific dog laws. We encourage Michigan to join 17 other states that have protected the rights of responsible dog owners while also ensuring community safety.

The AKC is a not-for profit organization that advocates for dogs as family companions, works to advance canine health and wellbeing, protect the rights of all dog owners, and to educate the public about responsible dog ownership.

We believe that *all* dog owners should be held accountable for the actions of their pets, regardless of the breed they own. For this reason, we support laws that establish a fair process by which individual dogs (regardless of breed) are identified as "dangerous" based on stated, measurable actions and laws that impose appropriate penalties on owners of these dogs. Such laws effectively protect both the safety of the community and the rights of responsible dog owners.

By contrast, breed-specific laws have been proven ineffective throughout the United States and around the world. Breed bans and other breed-specific laws fail to address the underlying cause of dangerous dog issues – irresponsible ownership – and force animal control officers to spend valuable time trying to identify dog breeds, rather than focusing on true animal problems in the community. They also arbitrarily punish law-abiding dog owners simply because of the breed of dog they own. In addition, breed-specific laws commonly force responsible owners to surrender a well-behaved pet to a shelter, where the dog must be cared for or euthanized at taxpayer expense. *Senate Bill 239 recognizes these pitfalls and ensures that communities will devote their resources to addressing the real problem of irresponsible owners and dogs that are truly dangerous, regardless of their breed.*

Dog ownership and exhibition has a tremendous impact on the Michigan economy. In 2015 alone, more than 650 AKC dog events were held in the state with over 101,600 dogs participating from across the United States. These shows generate significant revenue for local businesses through venue rental, restaurants, lodging, and many other items. Supporting Senate Bill 239 protects the rights of responsible dog owners and sends the message that they – and other lucrative dog events – are welcome in local Michigan communities.

We respectfully ask you to support Senate Bill 239 and welcome the opportunity to work with the State of Michigan to develop public education programs that teach about responsible dog ownership and safety – regardless of breed.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sheila Goffe
Vice President, Government Relations